

Koch Goma Secondary School - Girls' Dormitory

Project Summary

Completion of a 192 bed girls dormitory at Koch Goma Secondary School in northern Uganda as a key part of the school's return to its home village after 20 years of displacement due to war. £8,000 is needed to complete the project.

Background to Northern Uganda

The region has been devastated by 21 years of conflict between the Lords' Resistance Army rebels and the government. The rebels operated by raiding villages, abducting children and forcing them to become child soldiers, to kill their family members and to become child wives of rebel leaders. At the height of the conflict over 20,000 children converged nightly on the town of Gulu to sleep rough in the relative safety of the town. Over 100 schools were displaced from their home villages and have been crowded into the town for 20 years, sharing space wherever it was available.

There is now peace in the region and the task of rebuilding lives and communities is underway. With almost 2 million people currently living in camps for internally displaced people (IDP) and dependant on United Nations feeding programmes as the traditional agriculture has been impossible, this is a huge task.

Koch Goma Secondary School

The school teaches "O" and "A" level subjects to around 700 students. It was founded in 1984 in accommodation loaned by the church and was displaced due to the war in 1988. It has spent the past 20 years in Gulu town, some 15 miles from Koch Goma village, where it has endured very poor conditions and has had to move locations four times. However, they have always expected to return to the village eventually and have managed to acquire 200 acres of land in the village, thanks to the support of local villagers and a land compensation scheme from the government. They began building 14 classrooms in 1993 but were unable to complete them due to an increase in rebel activity. Now that peace has returned to the region, the school is concentrating on developing the site in order to return at the start of the next school year, February 2009.



TEMPORARY GRASS CLASSROOM AT THE SCHOOL'S SITE IN GULU TOWN

Planning for the Future

Now that there is peace in the area, the school's Board, PTA and administration are determined to return to their home village and to develop the school to be a well-resourced school which produces good academic results. As a very rural school, they will attract students from a wide area and will therefore have a mix of day and boarding students, which is the norm in Uganda.

Sustainable Communities Network (UK) is about to begin work on supporting the school with the development of a long term, comprehensive School Development Plan, taking a holistic approach to the return and resettlement of the school. The plan will cover:

- buildings, facilities and resources
- academic achievement
- organisation, management and administration
- sustainability

We will then continue to support the school in resourcing and implementing the plan.

Girls Dormitory

The development of student accommodation is a priority, taking into account the rural nature of the school, slow return by people from the IDP camps and cultural norms as far as secondary school boarding is concerned. Girls frequently get fewer opportunities for education than boys, hence the prioritising of a girls' dormitory over one for boys.

The dormitory will accommodate 192 students and will be built on the school's village site by a well known and reputable local construction company which successfully tendered for the project. It is being funded by African Revival, a small charity which has secured sufficient funds (£17,000) from an individual donor. This will complete the building's sub and super-structures and roof it. The school and community is contributing approximately 10% of the building costs through locally available materials.

When it became apparent that there were insufficient funds to complete the project, a number of alternative options were considered, but it was agreed that the dormitory, as planned, was the most pressing need. With the main construction comprising the most significant costs, the school felt that getting this built was most important. SCN (UK) agreed to seek additional funding to carry out the remaining elements of the project. These could, if necessary, be completed in stages after the main construction work. This is not an ideal scenario, but is indicative of the school's ability to make the most of the situation it faces.

Completion costs

An additional £8,000 is needed to complete the building project, broken down in order of priority as follows:

• doors and windows	£ 3,350
• cementing the floor	£ 2,350
• plastering and rendering	£ 1,575
• decoration	£ 725
TOTAL	£8,000

Anticipated Outcomes

Supporting this project will:

- provide essential accommodation for 192 girls in a purpose built dormitory at the school's village site, enabling them to study for "O" and "A" levels
- assist the school in returning to its rightful home in Koch Goma village
- help to motivate and encourage other members of the community to return home

Accountability, Monitoring and Evaluation

This will be carried out by Sustainable Communities Network (UK). The charity's founder and Chairman is currently working directly with the school and living in Uganda.

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